

Project I.D. No. 1

NAME: Hiura, Katsumi DATE OF BIRTH: 11/3/1900 PLACE OF BIRTH: Hiroshima  
Age: 70 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: Grammar School

PRE-WAR:

Date of arrival in U.S.: 1915 Age: 15 M.S. Y.Y. Port of entry: San Fran.  
Occupation/s: 1. School boy 2. Farmer 3. Apple Processing business  
Place of residence: 1. Sebastopol, Ca. 2. Alameda, Ca. 3. Watsonville, Ca.  
Religious affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Community organizations/activities: \_\_\_\_\_

EVACUATION:

Name of assembly center: North Dakota (Internment Camp)

Name of relocation center: Poston, Arizona

Dispensation of property: \_\_\_\_\_ Names of bank/s: \_\_\_\_\_

Jobs held in camp: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Jobs held outside of camp: \_\_\_\_\_

Left camp to go to: Watsonville, California

POST-WAR:

Date returned to West Coast: 1947

Address/es: 1. 53 Eaton St., Watsonville, Ca. 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Religious affiliation: Christian Church

Activities: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_

If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: Rev. Seimes Koga

Translator: Rev. Koga

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ISSEI HISTORY PROJECT

Interview No. 1      Name: Katsumi Hiura  
address: 53 Eaton Street, Watsonville, California

Interviewer: Rev. Sumie Koga, pastor of Westview United Presbyterian Church  
Watsonville, California

Translator: same

Interviewer: Today is October 2nd and I am now at Mr. Hiura's home. I will like to record about the experiences of his life through this interview.

Mr. Hiura, where were you born?

Hiura: Hiroshima-ken.

Interviewer: When were you born?

Hiura: Meiji 33 (1900 A.M.) November 3rd.

Interviewer: Was the Russo Japanese War over by that time?

Hiura: I think it was after the Russo Japanese War ended.

Interviewer: Were you in Japan when we had the World War I?

Hiura: I think I was still in Japan, but I am not so sure.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything about that War?

Hiura: I don't recall anything.

Interviewer: Then, when did you come to the U.S.A.

Hiura: I came to the Untied States in 1915. #

Interviewer: Why did you decide to come to the U.S.A.?

Hiura: I came because my father called me to come.

Interviewer: You went to grammer school in Japan, didn't you?

Hiura: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Do you rembmer anything about Japan? ##### Did you have any other brother or sister?

Hiura: I had a ~~young~~ brother, who came to the U.S.A with me at the same time.

Interviewer: Your folks were already here in the States and they called you to come, but while you were in Japan# who took care of you?

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Hiura: My grandfather and grandmother took care of me.

Interviewer: You came to United States in 1915, that means it was the time of Panama World Exposition, wasn't it?

Hiura: When I landed in San Francisco it was in the middle of the exposition.

Interviewer: Did you come directly to U.S.A. or #### stopped over at Hawaii## for a while?

Hiura: I came directly to the U.S.A.

Interviewer: You came to San Francisco, but were your parents living there?

Hiura: No, they were living near San Francisco called Sebastopol.

Interviewer: Then you joined your folks right after you arrived in San Francisco?

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you recall anything about the U.S.A. at that time?

Hiura: I don't remember anything specific, but I felt that America is a wonderful place.

Interviewer: Didn't you meet the immigration officer?

Hiura: Yes, I did.

Interviewer: Did you go to the Island (Angel Islands)?

Hiura: Yes, I went to the Island. I stayed there two or three days.

Interviewer: How was the attitude of the immigration officer toward you?

Hiura: Well, He was fairly kind considering everything.

Interviewer: Did some one come to fetch you at the Island?

Hiura: Yes, my father came and after questioning I was able to land.

Interviewer: Then, your entrance was processed very smoothly without any problem, isn't that right?

Hiura: Yes, that is correct.

Interviewer: Were there other people at the immigration office?

Hiura: Yes, there were many other?

Interviewer: Your impression of White man was very good as you arrived in this country, wasn't it?

Interviewer: When you went to Sebastapool You started to work for your father right away?

Hiura: I was supposed to go to school right away at first but since it was in the middle of the semister I couldn't go to school , so I worked.

Interviewer: Then, you did go to grammer school in this country , isn't that so?

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: Then how long did you go to school?

Hiura: Well, I had to start from A,B,C, so I started school from the first grade and gradually promoted as I learned.

Interviewer: Up to what grade did you go?

Hiura: In these days there were only a few grades in grammer school, so I went for a few years and stayed out for a while and then went again for couple of years. Then later since this wasn't enough I went to Alameda to study.

Interviewer: So, you went to Alameda for a while, is that so?

Hiura: I was doing a ~~school~~ boy job there in Alameda . I started in the regular class from third grade on.

Interviewer: Please tell me about your Alameda experience.

Hiura: I was good in arithmetic and there was very little I had to learn but my problem was the language and teacher concentrated on teaching me the subject.

Interviewer: Did you work in Alameda for a while?

Hiura: No, my father raised strawberry and apples so he was very busy during the farming season so I helped him. ##### I used the time when he wasn't busy to study at school.

Interviewer: Then your education was not continuous through out the year, but ##### occasional.

Hiura: Yes, you are right.

Interviewer: You studied during the slack season then you returned to Sebastapool for work during the farm season . And returned again to Alameda during the winter?

Hiura: That is correct.

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Interviewer: You continued your study and work for a while and finally in 1924 you were married and settled down in Sebastapool.

Hiura: That is correct.

Interviewer: Tell me about your experience of marriage , which took place in Japan.

Hiura: Well, in 1924 since there was a warning that if I didn't get married by that time there may not be any opportunity any more, so I went back to Japan to get married.

Interviewer: Did she have to go to the Angel Island, when she came , too?

Hiura: Yes, of course.

Interviewer: Did she stayed about two or three days?

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you go after her at the Island?

Hiura: No, my father had to go and get her.  
She was permitted to come after two days stay.

Interviewer: You both lived in Sebastapool for a while then you came to Watsonville 1927 and started the Apple drying business .

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell me about the apple processing business.

Hiura: Apple factory was owned by the Chinese , who had the seniority in the business at that time. When the World War I came to a close there was a depression in the land and such business was no longer possible. When we took over the factory it was run down . Bank told us to take over the business , so we took over the business through the Bank.

Interviewer: You said previously that it cost about \$5000. Is it correct?

Hiura: ##Yes, you are right.

Interviewer: When you took over the factory did you install the machineries?

Hiura: Yes. Since## there was hardly anything left inside the factory we had to install everything. \$5000 in those days were valuable and compare to today's currency it would amount to \$50,000.

Interviewer: What did you do with the dried apples you made? Did you export them?

Hiura: Yes. In those days dried apples were used by many countries and they were going to Europe. There were many buyers for our product.

Interviewer: You # needed labors to handle the production end. What kind of people worked for you?

Hiura: In those days it was mostly Phillipines.

Interviewer: Were there any Japanese worker?

Hiura: Yes, of course we had some Japanese working for us, but the specialized work were done by the Phillipine people. There were some Chinese worker also.

Interviewer: How many workers did you have?

Hiura: Well, 40 people more or less.

Interviewer: How much apples did you process?

Hiura: About 3 tons a day.

Interviewer: It was a large ~~operation~~ wasn't it?

Hiura: Well, yes.

Interviewer: When the World War II broke out I understand that you were interned in a special camp in North Dakota. And stayed there for four months.

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: While you were in the special camp did the officers ask any difficult questions?

Hiura: No. Not that I could think of. It was a simple question such as, "Do you think Emperor is a God?" It was something in that line of questioning.

Interviewer: Most likely they wanted to know where your loyalty lied.

Hiura: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer: From the special camp you went to Arizona, isn't that right?

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: Please tell me about your experience in Poston, Arizona.

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Hiura: It was a camp built in the middle of desert, so the barracks were built with lumber with paper walls. There were double roof because of the heat. It was very cold in winter. Though we built fire we didn't have enough oil and people with little children had priority on the oil. As far as jobs are concern those who had special position such as block manager, police, and doctors received wages \$19 a month, and others received \$16. and the labors \$12. Unemployed didn't receive anything.

Interviewer: I understand that you were hospitalized in the Relocation Center and stayed in the hospital almost eleven months, is that right?

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: How was the facilities of the hospital?

Hiura: The Hospital was quite well equipped considering the situation and the circumstances, but personally I felt it was rather inadequate. Like food was poor and the place was cold. There were many who died due to lack of care.

Interviewer: After the war you returned to Watsonville. Will you tell us about how you got started in your business again.

Hiura: We returned 1947.

Interviewer: I remember 1947, because I visited this town to be with Rev.

Howard Terumi who was the pastor of your Church at that time.

Hiura: Is that so.

Interviewer: You said that your factory was used as the Hostel for people for a while. Will you tell us about that experience?

Hiura: There were about 10 families staying in our factory and lived together.

Hiura: My sister and her family and two or three families ate at the same table.

Interviewer: Who did the shopping?

Hiura: My wife did the shopping.

Interviewer: With a large family living together you must had a lively time?

Hiura: Yes we did.

Interviewer: You were able to help each other and consequently felt close to each

other in time like that.

Hiura: Yes. We did feel close to each other.

Interviewer: I want to ask you a little more about your experience in the Relocation Center. Was Church very active during that time? Do you think that Church was helpful in your experience?

Hiura: Yes, it was.

Interviewer: You said that when you returned, however, there were some who were unfriendly and some were friendly.

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: When did you purchase this particular house you live in now? How much did it cost?

Hiura: It cost us about \$30,000.

Interviewer: How large is this house?

Hiura: There are five bedroom on the main floor and above the garage we have two extra bedrooms.

Interviewer: It is a large house isn't it. How are the neighbors to your family?

Hiura: They are very nice and we have no complaints.

Interviewer: What is the most painful experience you had after you returned to Watsonville?

Hiura: When our trusted friends refused to even speak to us and had little feeling toward us. This was the most painful thing for us. Some Electrician told me that I will never go to your place.

Interviewer: Isn't it strange that people who have direct relationship with your business act that way? There must have been a deep hatred against you?

Hiura: Yes

One of the worst case was when an Electrician refused to put the light on the Buddhist Church. This was quite a problem at that time. It lasted for quite

some time.

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Interviewer: If the electrician refused to put the light the company behind the worker <sup>must</sup> ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> the same kind of feeling toward the Japanese people at that time.

Don't you think so?

Hiura: I think so.

Interviewer: I understand also that you had a difficult <sup>time</sup> getting Gas for your cars and had to go up to Santa Cruz to purchase it.

Hiura: Yes, you are right.

Interviewer: Please tell me about your family.

Hiura: Father's name is Sakamatsu Hiura mother Ayame.

Interviewer: They <sup>were living</sup> ~~lived~~ in Sebastapool where you joined <sup>them</sup> from Japan.

Hiura: I have <sup>an</sup> ~~brothers~~ Charles, William both in Chicago. William is an Optometrist. West coast I have George, Dentist, Thomas, Dentist, two sisters, and

Wilfred and Pearse. I have children Lloyd, Clarence, Bob, Clarence, Paul, Daniel, and David. All of them except Paul are Pharmacists.

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Interviewer: The reason these people were able to educate themselves was

because your father started the business, which you succeeded and helped your brothers and children to be educated. So, your work was a tremendous work and accomplishment.

Hiura: This all roots back to the time when I first went to Alameda and

realized that in this country you have to be educated in order to succeed.

Somehow this made me determine to help toward the end for my brothers ~~#~~ and children to be educated. Church has much to do in my decision to do my best toward this end.

Interviewer: I suppose you were able to see the fact that here in U.S.A you

have to specialize in something and you need education for that.

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It was wonderful that you had such vision when you were still so young.

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: Church is not able to point out its mission in a concrete way but during the course of a long life time you could tell that it had variety of impact in your life, don't we.

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: How is your health?

Hiura: I am well now. After my operation I have been feeling well.

Interviewer: Do you still golf?

Hiura: Yes, I do.

Interviewer: That's fine. I understand that your family gather once a year to have golf tournament. It's a wonderful thing, isn't it? When is it that you have this get-together?

Hiura: We get together on fourth of July every year.

Interviewer: I know that you hold a Memorial service at that time to pay tribute to your parents.

Hiura: Yes, we do. About 50 or sixty people gather for that occasion.

We have been holding it since "Mama" passed away.

Interviewer: How many grandchildren do you have?

Hiura: About 16 to 17. I don't remember the exact number at this<sup>#</sup> time.

Interviewer: You still have some relative live in Sebastapool, don't you?

Where <sup>at</sup> were their name?

Hiura: Their name is Fujiwara and he practice Dentistry there.

Interviewer: So, you still have roots in Sebastapool, which is your old stamping ground?

Hiura: Yes.

Interviewer: Your daughter (who is married to Dr. Fujiwara) <sup>has</sup> ~~has~~ any children?

Hiura: She has four children.

Interviewer: You do have deep roots there in Sebastapool. I see.

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Hiura: Yes, indeed I have a deep tie with Sebastapool.

Interviewer: How old are you now?

Hiura: I will be 70 years old this year. So I am pretty old.

Interviewer: 70 is young for an Issei, I think.

Thank you very much for your patience.

Hiura: You are welcome.

Comment: Being the first interview I made mistake in handling the tape recorder, so actually I had three interview with him. But, he was very patient and kind all the way. Mrs. Hiura served tea and left for another errand, so we had a wonderful fellowship inspite of my blunders. I enjoyed the interview very much. S.K.